teen hannibal ficlets

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by emungere

Summary

What it says on the tin: a collection of ficlets about teen Hannibal and Will. This is the original prompt: *AU where Hannibal never meets Lady Murasaki and is somehow found by Will Graham and Will raises him instead. As Hannibal gets older he becomes obsessed with Will and so Teen Hannibal tries to seduce Guardian Will who is just like oh god someone save me.* It's pretty accurate.

Underage warning for kissing and discussions only, but they do have sex eventually, when Hannibal's much older.

Notes

These are now in roughly chronological order, and I'll try to keep them that way, so newer bits may end up as earlier chapters.

...Also in collecting these together, I realize I've switched tenses from chapter to chapter. I'll fix it, sorry.

See the end of the work for more notes

- Translation into 中文-普通话 國語 available: 少年汉尼拔断章 by riversandrust
- Translation into Русский available: Цикл мини-фиков про Ганнибала-подростка by nyavka

the little ghost

Will held another piece of beef jerky between his fingers while the dog danced nervously a foot away. Its tail wagged once, it took a step closer, and then its ears went back. It let out a sharp bark, looking past Will into the brush at the side of the road.

Will looked in the same direction. For a second, logic and science abandoned him and he was back on the docks in Louisiana, listening to old stories while unknown shapes moved in the mist. The boy stood knee-deep in weeds, with torn clothes and a pale face, and he looked like a ghost.

The dog barked again and then dashed forward to take the jerky. The boy flinched at the sound. He dropped low, crouched and almost hidden. Will shook off the spell. Even at this distance, he could see the rise and fall of the boy's chest, the blink of his eyes. He breathed, he moved. The tremor in the grass around him suggested that he was shaking. He was alive.

"Hello," Will said. The dog — Winston would be a good name — nosed at his hand. Will stroked his head and scratched his ears. "Are you hungry?"

Winston whuffed in agreement. The boy didn't move or speak. Will broke off another piece of jerky for Winston and held the rest out toward the boy. He did it without looking toward him, as he might for an unusually skittish dog, non-threatening and neutral.

Winston licked his other hand, and Will smiled at him. "Good boy. I know, you're hungry too. We'll get you some more food at home."

Will yawned. He rubbed at his eyes with the back of his wrist. Home wouldn't be happening any time soon unless he could get the boy in the car too. He risked a glance in that direction, just in time to see the boy creep silently up, snatch the jerky, and run off into the dark.

"Well, shit," Will muttered. He turned to Winston. "Let's get you loaded in at least."

That took a few minutes, but he got Winston lying down comfortably on a blanket in the back with a dish of water, closed the door, and went to stand by the edge of the road. He'd stopped at the gas station for a sandwich earlier, and now he took it from his pocket.

"I don't know if you can hear me," he said, not loud, but he was pretty sure the boy hadn't gone far. "I've got this for you. I'll leave it here." He set it down on the shoulder. "I'm going back to car. I'll wait for you. I don't know what kind of trouble you're in, but I'd like to help."

He got back behind the wheel. "So much for dinner," he told Winston. "I might have mac and cheese at home."

He yawned again. When he let his eyes close, he saw Elise Nichols impaled on antlers coming toward him through the dark. He jerked his eyes open again. "So much for sleep."

Winston barked quietly. Will saw that ragged, ghost pale shape steal out of the grass again, snatch the sandwich, and disappear.

If the boy didn't come to him, he'd have to call the local cops. He'd have to wait, give a statement. It'd be morning before he got home and all it'd end up doing was scaring the boy off for good. God knew where he'd end up, or who he'd end up with. Will crossed his arms over his chest and settled down in the seat. He knew he was still being watched. He'd give it at least another half hour. That wasn't much time to overcome so much fear.

Winston settled down to sleep. The moon rose higher. Will almost drifted off, but Elise kept him awake, staring at him with black eyes and leaking black blood from her wounds. In Will's mind, the killer patched them with antler velvet. His hands were so careful, his touch so tender.

The car door opened. Will jerked back to himself. The boy froze, poised to flee again. His dark eyes dominated a gaunt face. Scratches covered one cheek and the side of his neck, and he had twigs tangled in his fine hair like an abandoned bird's nest.

"Sorry," Will said quietly. "You startled me."

The boy said nothing, but he didn't run.

"Do you want to get in? Winston and I--" He nodded back toward the dog. "We were just going home. Do you like mac and cheese?"

The boy wrinkled his nose at that, but his stomach growled audibly at the same time. He looked back toward the field and then flung himself into the car seat with sudden decision.

"Thanks," Will said. "I thought I was going to fall asleep waiting here. Seatbelt."

The boy pulled the seatbelt across and fastened it. He was too short for it. twelve or maybe thirteen, Will thought, lightish hair, with a face made of sharp angles, finely drawn and almost otherworldly.

Will pulled out onto the road toward home.

"I thought you might be a ghost when I first saw you," Will said.

The boy looked over at him. He said nothing, but the look in his eyes suggested that he wasn't sure Will had been wrong.

a call from the police

After Will finds him, Hannibal is placed temporarily in a group home until Social Services decides what to do with him. He has no last name that he'll give anyone, there are no records of him that anyone's been able to find, he can't speak, and he won't communicate in any meaningful way with anyone but Will.

Watching him be put into the car and driven away out of Will's life is hard the first time. When Hannibal shows up at his house again, on foot, two days later, calling his case worker to come and pick him up is even harder.

The third time, Will gets a call from the police. "Do you know a boy, twelve or thirteen, sandy hair--"

"Yes," Will says, immediately frantic, almost sick with it. "Yes, is he okay?"

"He's fine, sir. He wrote down your number for us, but he won't give us anything else, not even his name."

Will tells them he'll be there as soon as he can. It takes longer than he'd like. The police station is in the middle DC. He chugs drive-thru coffee and drives too fast and busts through the station doors so hard and fast that the cop behind the desk jerks a hand toward his weapon before he recovers himself.

"Sorry," Will says, calmer. "My name's Will Graham. I got a call about a boy--"

Hannibal comes out of nowhere and wraps both arms around Will's waist and holds on like he doesn't plan to let go even if wild horses are involved. Will breathes out fully for the first time since he got the call. He lays a hand over the back of Hannibal's head and gives silent thanks to the entire universe. "You okay?" he says.

Hannibal nods with his face still pressed hard to Will's chest and looks up at him and points toward the door, eyebrows raised hard. Will glances around. All the cops are, if not smiling, at least wearing expressions that range from warm to amused. Will could probably convince them that Hannibal is his son, pull his FBI ID if necessary, walk out of here and take him home.

"I can't," he tells Hannibal.

Hannibal unfolds from around him, takes his wrist, and pulls him toward the door.

"I'm sorry," Will says.

Hannibal's expression says quite clearly that he thinks Will is an idiot. Will finds it hard to disagree.

*

Two hours later, they're still at the station, in a back room now. Hannibal is slumped against Will's side, asleep, while the cops talk to his case worker, Ms. Carr. She arrived only fifteen minutes ago, damp from the rain and looking even more tired than she had last time he'd seen her, which was fair enough. It was now nearly three in the morning.

She walks over, beige heels clicking on the tiled floor, and sits on the bench beside him. She sets a clipboard in his lap. "Sign," she says.

"What is this?"

"Temporary custody."

He reads over the forms. "But I said -- I offered. You didn't want me to keep him." He tries hard to squash the resentment in his voice and doesn't entirely manage it.

Ms. Carr leans forward, elbows on her knees. "It's not personal, Mr. Graham. He needs psychiatric care. A stable life. Kids his own age. You're very isolated and your work hours are unpredictable at best."

"None of that's changed."

"I'd rather have him with you than wandering DC at midnight. Sign."

It's not a ringing endorsement, but Will can't really blame her. He signs.

Hannibal lifts his head from Will's shoulder and rubs sleep from his eyes. He scans the forms. Will can heard his inhale. He makes a hand motion like water, question in his eyes.

Will smiles at him. "Yeah, we're going home."

*

Hannibal is dead to the world by the time Will gets him back to the house. It's nearly dawn. Will carries Hannibal inside, but he wakes when the dogs come to say hello and squirms down to kneel on the floor with them, arms around Winston's neck. Will found them both on the same night. He wonders if he'll end up keeping both of them.

"Hungry?" he asks.

Hannibal nods emphatically and mimes retching, presumably to describe the quality of food at the group home.

"Grilled cheese?" He gets another nod and gets to work.

When he brings two sandwiches to the table, he sees Hannibal with Will's copy of the temporary custody papers, reading every word. Hannibal taps the papers against the table when he's done, squares the edges, and sets them carefully aside. He looks at Will and touches his wrist, where a watch would go.

"How long?" Will says.

Hannibal nods, mouth tight and determined.

"As long as they'll let me," Will says.

Hannibal's expression wavers and then crumbles. He doesn't cry -- Will's only seen him cry in his sleep -- but when Will reaches for him, he holds on desperately tight. Will closes his eyes and rubs circles into his back while he shakes. He wants to tell him it'll be okay, but he doesn't know that.

"Forever," he says, which is much worse. It's the stupidest possible promise. But Hannibal looks up at him with wary hope and trust, and Will is not going to disappoint him. He'll make it happen. Somehow. "I promise," he says.

the kiss

When Will found Hannibal by the side of the road like a stray, he was thirteen, mute, too thin and small for his age. He spent half his nights on the floor with Will's dogs and the other half in Will's bed, hiding from his dreams.

That's still what Will sees when he looks at him, this terrified, brilliant child who changed every part of his life. But Hannibal at sixteen is not the same boy. He's stronger, broader, nearly as tall as Will now, popular at school, on the lacrosse team. Will is expecting (dreading) news of a girlfriend. They have talked about safe sex and condoms, but Will remembers being sixteen and what an irresponsible asshole he was. He can only hope Hannibal will be smarter.

In general, he hopes Hannibal will be better than he was in just about every way possible, and so far he is, which makes it a surprise when he comes home with a bloody nose and bruised knuckles. Will's stomach twists at the sight of him, half with worry and half with horrible anticipation of the meeting with Hannibal's principal that suddenly looms in his future.

Hannibal's clutching his motorcycle helmet to his stomach, looking young and uncertain as he seldom does these days, and Will takes him into the bathroom to clean him up before he asks any questions. Hannibal came straight home before he even washed up. That's something more than a schoolyard scuffle.

"Aren't you going to yell?" Hannibal asks, muffled by the washcloth as Will wipes blood from his face.

"Do I ever yell?"

"No. Never." Hannibal takes the cloth from him and wipes hard at his nose, trying and failing to conceal his pain. "You must've wanted to. All those meetings with my teachers, all the days in court to get custody. I know you hate that kind of thing. Was I ever anything but trouble for you?"

"Hey." Will squeezes his shoulder until Hannibal looks up at him. "You were never trouble. I was never anything but glad I found you. Not once. Okay?"

For a moment, Will sees himself through Hannibal's eyes, the fixed point in an unstable world that has already come crashing down around him once in his short life. The look on Hannibal's face is naked yearning. It's only there for a second, and then Hannibal hugs him tight the way he used to when he couldn't find his way out of his nightmares. Will holds him close and wonders if this is the last time. He can see rough water ahead.

*

Hannibal comes to sit on the edge of Will's bed in the dark and pull at the sheets. Will's awake in a second. It's how Hannibal used to ask if he could sleep with him, when he still couldn't talk, when his nightmares woke him up screaming.

It’s been two and a half years. They got Hannibal his own bed, and he has stayed in it out of pride if nothing else, though Will has sometimes heard him crying in the next room and wished he would wake him. Now that he has, Will’s hardly going to turn him away, no matter how strange it might seem to an outsider.

He pulls the covers back, and Hannibal crawls in beside him, close, ice cold hands on Will’s shoulder and back.

"D’you have a bad dream?" Will asks him, voice rough with sleep.

Hannibal shakes his head. His fingers dig into Will’s skin, and his breath comes in quick puffs against Will’s neck. There’s a fine tremor to his grip. Will can feel the throb of his heart shaking them both.

He cups a hand around the back of Hannibal’s head. "You okay? What is it?"

Hannibal pulls back far enough to look at him, eyes almost luminous in the dark. And then he presses his mouth to Will’s. Hard, clumsy, sharp teeth against his lip. Despite all of that, there’s a second when all Will wants to do is kiss him back.

It’s denial of that more than rejection of Hannibal that makes him plant his hands against Hannibal’s chest and shove.

"What the hell!"

Hannibal tumbles back off the bed and looks up at him with more pain than Will has ever seen on his face. Will’s never hurt him before, never touched him with anything but kindness, never raised his voice to him.

Hannibal’s up in a moment, out the door, and Will hears the sound of his motorcycle grumbling to life.

He sits on the edge of the bed and puts his face in his hands.

*

It's nearly dawn when Hannibal returns. Will has called every hospital in a thirty mile radius and had to stop himself calling in a BOLO at least seven times. If Hannibal doesn't want to be home, he has every right after what Will did. The hours of worry that slid into fear and nausea were no more than Will deserved.

He sits on the edge of the bed and makes himself stay there while Hannibal comes in and stands, hesitating, surrounding by dogs and staring at Will.

"I forgot my helmet," he says in a small voice. "I'm sorry."

Will had made him promise five times over when he bought him the damn bike that he'd always wear it, every time. It's too much. Will goes to him and pulls him close as carefully as he had in their first weeks together when Hannibal often wouldn't stay in the same room with him, let alone allow this much contact.

Hannibal flings his arms around Will's waist and holds on tight. More apologies, muffled by speaking them directly into Will's shirtfront. His shoulders hitch along with his breath, and his voice cracks.

"It's okay," Will tells him. "I'm sorry, it's not you, there's nothing wrong with you. I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have -- God, I'm so sorry."

Hannibal looks up at him with tears in his eyes and an expression that threatens to collapse entirely, and he is *so beautiful*\. Will can't look at him. He pulls him close again and kisses the top of his head. It fits just under his chin, though not for long. He's growing every day.

"Where did you go?" he asks.

"I stayed on the back roads. I watched some horses. I don't know where I was. I'm sorry. You're not angry?"

"I'm not angry."

"But you don't ..." Hannibal looks down at his boots. A pink flush is rising to his cheeks. His lashes are wet and dark, clumped together in spikes. His hands are still twisted in Will's shirt.

"We'll talk about it," Will says, because denying it right now would be a lie. He's never lied to Hannibal, and that's a record he intends to keep intact. "Let's try to get a little sleep first."

"Can I stay with you? I won't … do anything."

Will doesn't even hesitate. The truth is that he can barely stand the idea of letting Hannibal out of his sight right now. Having him close enough to touch, to protect, is ideal.

Hannibal's still in his pajamas, and he kicks off his boots and waits in Will's bed while Will gets out of his jeans. He's never felt odd about wearing boxers and t-shirt around Hannibal before. He struggles past the feeling of exposure, though he can feel Hannibal's gaze on his skin.

In bed together with the lights out, Hannibal turns toward him. "I know this is strange. It was strange when I was twelve."

"There were plenty of times I would've crawled into bed with someone if I could've when I was your age. There still are."

"You could. I'm right across the hall."

He's stood in the doorway and watched Hannibal sleep, not as often now as he used to, but there are still nights when he needs to be sure Hannibal's still breathing. This doesn't seem like the time to admit it.

"What happened at school?" he asks instead.

Hannibal ducks his head. "Someone brought in that article that Freddie Lounds did when you were try to get custody. He put it up all over school."

"Who did?"

Hannibal laughs a little and wipes at his eyes. "I knew you'd ask that if I told you. I knew just how you would say it. Like a threat."

"I'm sorry, I don't mean to—"

"No, I like it. I always liked it." He bends his head down so far that all Will can see is the very top, and he holds onto the front of Will's shirt. "You frighten other people sometimes. I can see it when they look at you. But you always made me feel s-safe."

Will's heart lurches in his chest, and he lays a hand on the back of Hannibal's neck. "I'll always take care of you. Doesn't matter how old you get. I'll be here if you need me."

Hannibal takes a soft wet breath and squirms closer to wind his arms around Will's neck. Will holds him and listens to the silence of the still house, the minute sounds of its settling. He knows he's probably making things worse, but he can't bring himself to let go.

breakfast

In the morning, Hannibal is up and making eggs and pancakes and bacon before Will drags himself out of his dreams.

"Do I smell coffee?"

"I'm not bringing it over there. You have to come get it. And put slippers on, the floor's cold."

Will smiles to himself and puts slippers on. Hannibal got them for him for his last birthday with his own money, earned from last summer's job as an aid at the veterinary clinic that sees Will's dogs. Dr. Gardiner said he had a way with the animals.

He shuffled into the kitchen. The dogs had been fed already, and Hannibal handed him his favorite mug filled to the brim.

"Breakfast soon."

The bowl he'd used for the pancakes has already been washed.

"I'm not mad at you," Will says.

Hannibal looks at him sideways from under the fringe of his hair. "Are you sure?"

"I'm sure. And you need a haircut."

Hannibal rolls his eyes.

There's orange juice on the table when Will carries their plates over. "Did you squeeze this?"

"We had oranges."

"I'm really not mad."

"Eat," Hannibal says with a quelling look.

Will holds his hands up. "Eating."

He eats. Hannibal doesn't. He cuts his pancakes into bits and pushes them around in the syrup. Will's halfway done before he takes a bite.

"You really don't, I mean, you could never…?" Hannibal's looking down at his plate.

"You're my responsibility," Will says.

"That's not a no."

"Yes, it is."

Hannibal looks up at him then, eyes sharp and direct. He's always seen Will more clearly than anyone else. "That's an expression of intention, not of desire," he says.

Now Will is the one to stare down at his plate. "That's appropriate, since this is about what I intend to do."

"It's not. That's not what I asked."

"But that's my answer."

Hannibal's quiet for a few seconds. "If it was no, you'd say no. But it's not yes. You don't look at me that way."

"You knew that already, but you still--" He's the adult here, for God's sake, he's not going to stutter over this. "You still kissed me."

"I wanted to know ... I had to know what you would do. I had to. I couldn't stop thinking about it."

"Well. Now you know."

"Yes. I--" He stops short, and his cheeks go pink and so do the tips of his ears.

Will can't not ask. "What?"

Hannibal shakes his head hard. Will nudges his foot gently under the table.

Hannibal looks up at him. "I've got bruises from falling out of bed. I was going to ask if you'd k-kiss them better. Please don't say anything."

Will doesn't, mostly because he has no idea what to say. That's been a pretty common theme in their lives together, and Hannibal is used to his silences, if not to this particular reason for them. He leaves Will at the table and takes their plates out to the kitchen.

Will about to tell him he doesn't have to clean up, but then Hannibal's back, swinging a leg over Will's thighs and sitting in his lap. Will freezes. He doesn't want to push Hannibal away again, but he's going to have to, and it makes his chest hurt.

Hannibal doesn't try to kiss him though. He doesn't do anything. He sits there with his hands on Will's shoulders. After a second, he takes Will's face between his hands, but that's a familiar gesture. Hannibal always wanted eye contact, and when he still couldn't speak, this was how he got it. Soft, insistent hands holding Will just the way Hannibal wanted him.

Will can remember Alana trying not to laugh the first time she saw that performance. *You'll let him get away with anything*, she said. Maybe she was right.

"This is okay?" Hannibal says. "You're not pushing me off."

"I don’t know what’s okay. I don’t know where the line is."

Hannibal smiles a little, but his eyes are sad. "I think if I tried to kiss you again, you’d find the line fairly quickly."

"Yeah."

For a second, Will’s afraid he’ll try it anyway, but Hannibal only leans forward to drape his arms around Will’s neck and snuggle against him with a sigh. Will’s arms come around him of their own accord. It occurs to him that he’s spent more time touching Hannibal than any other single person in his life.

A sharp review of his own past behavior shows him nothing untoward, but it’s enough to make him nudge Hannibal until he gets up. Will stands and goes into the kitchen to start the dishes.

"You have plans today?" he asks.

"No. What about the engine?"

There’s a 1964 Mustang up on blocks in Will’s barn, because he’s a pushover, and it was cheap, and Hannibal would at least learn something even if they never got it into drivable condition.

"Sure," he says. "When I’m done here. Get some clothes on and brush your teeth."

"I’m not *twelve."*

He was twelve four years ago. Four years is nothing. Will wonders if he can talk to Alana about this without Alana talking to social services. Maybe she should be talking to social services. Fuck.

He bends over the sink and scoops cold water over his face. All he has to do is say no.

sixteen going on seventeen

Hannibal got home from school early enough that Will knew he'd been speeding. He parked his motorcycle on the grassy verge of the driveway and sat down on the porch steps, helmet beside him, bent over his knees. Will let the dogs out and watched as they surrounded him. Buster jumped up into Hannibal's lap and tried to lick his face. Hannibal rubbed his back until he settled down, put an arm around Winston, and looked back over his shoulder at Will.

"I'm all right," he said.

Will just waited. Hannibal's more volatile adolescent years seemed to be over, but he'd learned that silence worked wonders on even the worst teenage moods.

"Do you remember the boy I got in a fight with at school?" Hannibal said.

"The one who put up that TattleCrime article about me?"

"That one, yes." Hannibal paused. He scratched Radar's ears. "Did I tell you he's joined the lacrosse team?"

"You mentioned it. A couple times."

Hannibal gave him a quick, rueful smile. "I suppose I did. I overheard him talking to the coach today. About me. Lies. I think I repaired most of the damage. The coach mistrusts his motives."

Will came out onto the porch and sat down beside him. "That's good. Right?"

"I didn't hit him," Hannibal said. "I wanted to. Very much."

"I'm proud of you."

Hannibal leaned against Will's side and bent down until he could put his head on Will's shoulder. "I still want to. I thought about beating him with a lacrosse stick. The blood. The way everyone would look at me afterward."

"How do you think they'd look at you?"

"They would be afraid. There are times when I would like them to be afraid of me."

Will put an arm around him. "We've talked about this before."

"The dark places of our minds do not define us. We are not our worst thoughts and impulses."

"That's right."

"Even if we want to be?" Hannibal said. "He caught me alone afterward in the locker room. I was so afraid of what I might do to him that I did nothing. I couldn't even answer him."

Will laid his cheek against the top of Hannibal's head. "I'm sorry. I know it's hard. I know it sucks. I don't think it ever really gets easier."

Hannibal let out a quick breath of laughter. "How reassuring you are."

"I try."

They sat in silence with the dogs all around them. Will became more aware of Hannibal's body against his, the way it had softened to fit against him, Hannibal's warm breath on his neck. He felt like he should pull away, but he didn't want Hannibal to read it as rejection, especially not right now. He stayed, even when Hannibal put a hand on his thigh. They hadn't discussed the kiss or Hannibal's attraction to him since the day after it had happened.

"It's almost my birthday," Hannibal said. "I'll be seventeen."

"I know," Will said, wary.

"I thought we might go camping."

Will blinked a couple of times out at the bare trees and the bright blue sky. This was not the conversation he'd been expecting. "Oh yeah?"

"Why not?"

"It'll be cold."

"I don't mind. We could go ice fishing," Hannibal said. "I would like to try cooking the fish in clay on the campfire."

"You don't want a party or anything? What about your friends?"

Hannibal was quiet for a few seconds. "They're not really my friends, Will. They can't be. Our experiences and the way our minds work are too different. I do my best to get along with them and present an acceptable face to the world, but I would rather spend my time with someone who understands me."

The worst of it was that Will couldn't even argue with him. He knew exactly what Hannibal meant, and he felt the same. "Okay," he said. "Camping. You want to skip school Friday and we can leave early?"

Hannibal tilted his head to look up at him. "Really?"

"Really."

Hannibal hugged him tight and then, after a half second of hesitation, kissed his cheek. He launched himself off the porch steps, calling to the dogs. The whole pack followed him. He grabbed a stick and lobbed it high. As they chased after it, he looked back over his shoulder at Will, smiling in the sunlight.

Will’s heart lurched. He hoped, not for the first time since Hannibal had come to him, that he wouldn’t fuck this up.

camping

Hannibal came home from school on Thursday, wheeled his bike into the barn, and stood expectantly next to the car, which he had packed that morning before Will was even awake.

Will leaned in the doorway, a smile pulling at his mouth. “You don’t want to change? Eat something? Say goodbye to the dogs?”

“You said it was a long drive. We should start as soon as possible.” But he did come up to the porch to sit with the dogs and scratch their ears.

“Uh huh. Very logical.”

“You’re mocking me,” Hannibal said.

“A little. I’m glad you’re excited. I made sandwiches. You can eat while we drive.”

“Alana’s looking after the dogs?”

Will nodded.

Hannibal stroked Winston’s back. “There’s enough room in the car for them.”

“Next time. There’s a no-dog surprise on this trip.”

Hannibal looked up at him, wheels visibly turning behind his eyes as he tried to guess.

“You want a hint?” Will asked.

“No. I’d like to be surprised, I think. Can we leave now?”

“Go and change first. You can’t wear your school uniform camping.”

Hannibal rolled his eyes but obeyed.

Will said his own goodbyes to the dogs, and, ten minutes later, they were on the road. Hannibal ate half a ham and brie sandwich and then pulled out his homework.

“Really?” Will said.

“You’re supposed to encourage me in my schoolwork.”

“I do, but I wouldn’t make you do it in the car.”

Hannibal bent over his trigonometry textbook. “I don’t want to do it at the campsite, and I don’t want it hanging over me all weekend. Better to have it over with.”

“Were you always like this? I’d put off my homework till Sunday night if my dad didn’t nag me about it.”

Hannibal paused, pressing the eraser end of his pencil against his lower lip. “I don’t think so. I can remember my father being angry because I wasn’t doing my schoolwork. It was all so dull.”

“And this isn’t?”

“Oh, it is. But—“

Will glanced over. Hannibal was looking at him, eraser pressed into the side of his chin now. “What?”

“I think in the beginning I didn’t want to make you angry. About anything. And then when I didn’t seem to be able to make you angry no matter what I did, I didn’t want to disappoint you.”

“You’re not going to disappoint me, Hannibal. Even if you never do your math homework again.”

“Is that so?”

Will glanced his way again. Hannibal was holding his textbook halfway out the open window. “Hey!”

“You just said—“

“I can arrest you for littering, you know.”

“Can you? You don’t even have a temporary badge anymore.”

“Citizen’s arrest,” Will said. He’d stopped working with the BAU about three months after Hannibal came into his life. It’d been hard enough finding someone to look after seven dogs while he was away at crime scenes. He hadn’t wanted to ask anyone to look after his silent, surly charge. More than that, he’d never wanted to leave Hannibal alone. “That thing cost money, you know.”

“It shouldn’t. It’s useless. It ought to be fuel for our camp fire.” Hannibal pulled it back into the car and rolled the window up. “I’ve learned far more online.”

He had. Will had seen the results. The equations were completely beyond him. “You probably could’ve tested out and graduated by now.”

“I see no significant academic advantage in starting university early, only a social disadvantage.”

“When did you start worrying about social disadvantage?”

“I haven’t. The time for that is in university and medical school when the people I meet will be useful as future professional contacts.”

“Or friends,” Will said.

“You’re my friend.”

“I’m your guardian.”

“And when I am an adult, will you cease all contact with me?”

“Of course not.”

“So then we will be friends,” Hannibal said. “All relationships change or dissolve eventually. Since we will not dissolve, we had better change. Don’t you think?” He gave Will a suspiciously bright smile.

Will hoped he wasn’t planning anything beyond camping this weekend and wondered abruptly if he should’ve brought two tents. Barely a year, and Hannibal would be gone. His crush would wear off. He’d find someone in college, maybe someone he cared enough about to bring home. Will would smile and welcome them and do his best to be pleasant, and they’d forget about this. In the back of his mind spoke the voice of incipient regret: *he’ll forget about you.*

Yes, he would. He should. He’d have his own life. That was how it was supposed to go. Will had known that from the start. It occurred to him only now how lonely he would be when it happened.

“Okay. Friends other than me,” Will said.

“And who are your friends? Other than me. And perhaps Alana.”

Will drove in silence, looking for an answer he didn’t have. “I’ve mentioned before that I’m not the best role model, right?”

“You have. But I still see more of myself in you than in anyone I have ever met.”

“In your sixteen whole years on planet Earth.”

Hannibal took the other half of his sandwich and handed it to Will. “You’re only trying to rile me. You know it’s not fair to compare me to other people my age.”

Will ate his sandwich instead of answering.

*

They bumped down a long gravel road and finally turned into an empty dirt lot. “Is this the campsite?” Hannibal asked.

“Nope. Not yet. We’ve got a walk ahead of us.”

They pulled on their packs and set out. The trail ended at the edge of a wide green-brown lake that sparkled with the late afternoon sun. Will pointed across the water to an island. “That’s the camp site.”

Hannibal shaded his eyes and stared across at the bare trees and withered grass. It had turned warmer, and there would be no ice fishing, but the island still made a bleak picture. Hannibal smiled at it. “It’s beautiful,” he said.

“Good surprise?”

“Very.”

A canoe was waiting for them on the shore, courtesy of the property owner who rented out the island to campers on the weekends. They piled their gear into it. Will waited until Hannibal was settled in the front and then pushed off and hopped in himself. “We can fish in the canoe if you really want to fish, he said.

Hannibal slid his paddle smoothly through the dark water, head turned to watch the ripples. “I don’t know what I want.” He spoke in a low tone that fell away like a stone dropped into the lake, eaten up by the sound of wind through bare branches. “I want to stay here forever.”

“I think the dogs would miss us.”

“I suppose seven dogs in a canoe would have been an issue.”

“I think we would’ve ended up with one dog in a canoe and six wet dogs wanting to sleep in the tent with us.”

They paddled on in silence. When they reached the campsite on the shore of the island, Hannibal set up their tent while Will started a camp fire. The sun was dropping quickly behind the trees, and the shadows were growing long and blue.

Hannibal had brought bread dough from home and wound it around sticks to cook in spirals over the fire. That was Will’s job, while Hannibal made the chili. They ate mostly in silence, facing the water, with the fire warming their backs.

The sun set. The only light was theirs. Not a sound reached them but the delicate lick of water against the shore. No cars. No planes overhead. No human voices.

“Do you want to know something else I remember?” Hannibal said.

“Yes.”

“I remember standing by the edge of the water. It wasn’t a lake. Perhaps a river. Or a moat. Something narrow but still. I remember wanting to wade in and sink to the bottom. Not to drown, but simply to stay there. I remember thinking it would be quiet and cool.”

“Sounds nice,” Will said. “I wouldn’t mind living at the bottom of a lake.”

“I told the therapist about it when I was fourteen. He asked me endless questions about it, as if it were something very strange. It never seemed strange to me.”

Will eased back onto his elbows to look at the stars. “Might be a little dull for you.”

“But not for you?”

“You know me. Easily entertained.”

Hannibal made a small sound of amusement. “You could sort through all the wrecks and repair them. They would rise from the depths miraculously healed.”

“What about you? Would you heal all the sailors?”

Hannibal prodded the coals with a stick until a shower of sparks flared up. He added another log. “I don’t know. Would you be disappointed if I didn’t go to medical school?”

“Nope. It’s your life. You do what you want with it.”

Hannibal leaned closer and looked down into Will’s face. “I want to kiss you. I can’t think about anything else.”

“Hannibal—”

“Can I? Just once? I know you don’t want … this. Me." He swallowed but he didn’t look away. "But I’ve never kissed anyone except for that night, and that wasn’t— It didn’t go very well. Clearly. I’d really like it to be you. Please."

His eyes were wide and earnest, and some treacherous voice in Will’s mind said: *at least he wouldn’t forget you.* He thought of Hannibal twenty years from now with a family, a medical practice if he stayed on that road, a full life, visits at Christmas if Will was lucky. He tried to judge whether Hannibal would look back on this with fondness or betrayal. He couldn’t decide, and Hannibal was watching him with such hope, and Will had always been terrible at saying no to him.

"Please," Hannibal said. His voice cracked.

Will had always known he wasn’t a good person. He tried, but he wasn’t. “Just once,” he said.

Hannibal stared at him with his mouth open and then shut it and swallowed visibly. He touched Will’s cheek. His palm was damp and warm. His eyes stayed open as he leaned in. Will closed his own when Hannibal’s face began to blur. The first touch of his lips was off center, and his nose bumped against Will’s, and his hand slid up into Will’s hair.

He licked across Will’s lips. It was more than Will had meant to allow, but his mouth opened to the touch before he could think. Hannibal pressed his advantage immediately, made a small hungry sound as his tongue slid into Will’s mouth, and Will had to put a hand on his chest to keep him from climbing on top of him. Hannibal clutched at his hair and slid his tongue along Will’s, clumsy and eager.

Will had to pull back finally. Hannibal wasn't going to stop. He sat up, and they looked at each other by the red light of the dying fire.

"Are you still going to tell me no after that?" Hannibal said. He was looking at Will's mouth.

"Yeah."

"Why?"

"Because I don't want you to hate me in ten years."

Hannibal turned his face away, silent for a few seconds. "What if I hate you right now?"

"You don't. You're just frustrated. And—"

"If you say confused, I will swim back across the lake and steal your car and leave you here. I am not confused."

"Okay," Will said. He put a hand on Hannibal's back. "We'll stick with frustrated."

"That's accurate. I am frustrated. Sexually and in every other sense."

Will had no idea what to say to that.

Hannibal wiped at his eyes with the back of his hand. "I thought you would see. Why won't you see?"

"I can't, Hannibal. I'm sorry."

They cleaned up their meal in silence.

*

The next day, everything was eerily normal, to the point where Will wondered if the kiss had been a dream. He could've fallen asleep after dinner. He pressed his knuckles against his lips and saw Hannibal catch the gesture and stare. Not a dream then, but Hannibal seemed willing to let it go, at least for now.

They fished. Hannibal cooked their catch. Will listened to the weather on a portable radio as the temperature dropped. Ice was starting to crackle around the edges of the lake, and Hannibal was wearing his sleeping bag as a blanket, huddled close to the fire.

"We could leave early," Will said.

"No. I like it. Do you know what I think?"

"I never know what you think."

"I think that if we always lived like this, away from everyone, you would've said yes. You're not worried about me. You're worried about everyone else."

Will turned off the radio. “And you don’t think that’s something to worry about? Everyone, literally every single person we know, would be—“ He stopped, unable to think of a word that would encompass the sheer range of outrage and horror.

“Disgusted,” Hannibal said. He looked into the fire, chin propped on one hand. “They would be disgusted by what I want. And so are you.”

“I’m not.” Will came to sit next to him on the log in front of the fire. “But you’ve got to see that it can’t — it just can’t happen.”

“Because of what they would say? Even after I’m eighteen?”

“Partly, yeah. No one would accept it. No one could.”

“We wouldn’t have to tell them. We could go away somewhere.”

“Is that really what you want? To be cut off from everyone you’ve met here?”

Hannibal turned his head slowly to look at him. “I’ve told you many things I never told my therapist, Will. I think you’re aware of how little connection I feel to others. It would not bother me to leave them behind. Not at all. I don’t think it would bother you that much either.”

Now it was Will’s turn to stare at the fire. For a second, he let himself imagine it: they could go away somewhere, Canada maybe, or Europe, or Brazil. They’d be together. He’d never have to give Hannibal up. “What kind of a life would that be for you?” he said, throat tight.

“It would be whatever sort of life we chose to make it.”

*

Will woke that night with the feeling of someone watching him. He could barely see the shadow of Hannibal’s body against the softer shadow of the tent wall.

“I want to have sex with you,” Hannibal said.

Will put a hand over his eyes.

“You let me kiss you once,” Hannibal went on. “Couldn’t you allow this too? Just once? I’d like you to be the first.”

“No.”

“Will—”

“No. Hannibal. No. We are not doing this. Go to sleep.”

*

They walked. They fished. They took the boat out on the lake and explored the shoreline. Hannibal didn't bring it up again. Will let himself hope, again, that they were done talking about this.

It wasn't until the drive home on Sunday that the other shoe — or the the third or fourth shoe — dropped.

"How old were you when you had sex for the first time?" Hannibal said.

Will glanced at him, but Hannibal was looking straight ahead at the road. "Sixteen."

"With a girl?"

"Yeah, with a girl."

"Did you enjoy it?" Hannibal asked.

"I probably enjoyed it more than she did. I didn't have any idea what I was doing."

"It does seem wise to try it for the first time with a more experienced partner."

"Hannibal—"

"Don't you want me to talk to you about sex? You always said I could talk to you about anything."

"I didn't know I was going to be personally involved when I said that."

"I could talk to someone else if you'd prefer that. Or not talk."

Will's hands tightened on the steering wheel.

"It doesn't have to be you," Hannibal said. "I'd rather it was, but it doesn't have to be. I could pick up someone at a bar. I don't think I'd have any trouble, do you?"

"Don't," Will said. He could barely get the word out past the knot in his throat that was equal parts possessive rage and fear for Hannibal's safety. "Don't do that."

"Is that a new rule?" Hannibal said softly. "Pick up my clothes, make my bed, don't go out and fuck strangers?"

Will said nothing. Hannibal was quietly smug all the way home.

harvard graduation

Hannibal's graduating from Harvard. Will couldn't be more pleased or proud or more on the edge of being overwhelmed by the immense crowd, the noise, the number of people who want to congratulate him on Hannibal's behalf and is Will really old enough to be his father and what a bright boy and on and on. The ceremony wasn't so bad, but the reception afterward ends as so many have for Will in the past: with a drink behind a potted plant.

One of Hannibal's professors is talking to him, but that's fine. There's only one of him and he expects, apparently, nothing in the way of conversation from Will, who has always been happy to be told how amazing Hannibal is.

"So mature for his age," the man is saying, which Will has heard before, and which is frighteningly true, even more so now that he's been living on his own. "I'm not surprised he's--" He stopped dead.

Will glanced behind him, but nothing shocking had appeared. "Not surprised he's what?"

"It just occurred to me, I don't know if you know. I'm sorry. I wouldn't want to betray a confidence." A look of relief washed over the man's face. "Oh, here they are. I'm sure Hannibal means to introduce you."

Hannibal approaches with a smile and a stranger at his side, too old to be one of his classmates, mid-twenties at least. Maybe even thirty. Dark hair, blue eyes. Taller than Will is. He has a bright, almost brittle smile.

"Will, this is Jonah," Hannibal says. "You remember I told you I'd met someone."

Will shakes Jonah's hand. They agree that it's nice to meet each other. Hannibal sends Jonah off for drinks, and he goes immediately. He orbits Hannibal like a lesser celestial body around a sun.

Will draws Hannibal to the side when they finally leave the reception. "Don't do this," he says.

"Do what?"

"You know what. He likes you, Hannibal. A lot."

Hannibal looks at Jonah and back to Will with a faint frown. "We only met two weeks ago."

"Sometimes that's enough."

"Are you telling me to stop seeing him?"

"That's what you want, isn't it? That's why you picked him," Will says.

"Yes. I didn't think you would though."

Will wouldn't do it for his own sake or even for Hannibal's. If he thought Jonah were any more than a chess piece for Hannibal to use in the continuing war between them, he would've kept his mouth shut. Even then, if the man weren't so obviously smitten -- but he is.

"Stop seeing him," Will says.

Hannibal smiles at him, soft and happy, like Will has given him the best graduation present he could wish for. "All right, Will. I'll tell him in the morning."

florence

#coffee with alana

Hannibal went to Florence the summer between Harvard and medical school. He wrote Will every week, sometimes twice. The letters were half travelogue with stories and sketches, half dissection of his own mind on paper. All of them ended the same way: 'I wish you'd come. I miss you.' Will wrote back and never pointed out that there was such a thing as email. He liked having the paper to hold in his hands.

Alana held one up as she walked in the door. "The mailman caught me at the end of the drive. News from Florence. I only get postcards."

Will set the letter aside. "Coffee?"

"Please." She sat at the table and watched him. "Are you two okay?"

"Was I ever okay? Hannibal's fine."

"He says to tell you that you should go to Florence. Why isn't he telling you?"

Will sighed. "He's told me."

She looked at him, waiting. The coffee dripped, and the scent of it filled the room. Birds sang in the tree outside, loud and shrill. If he told her now, at least Hannibal wouldn't end up in foster care. He was an adult now. He'd be fine.

Hannibal wouldn't want her to know. It would feel like a betrayal.

Will shrugged. "You think I should go?"

"Why not? You could stand to relax a little. I don't know if anyone's ever told you."

"Nope. Nobody."

They smiled at each other. Will got down two mugs and froze momentarily as another thought struck him: he didn't want to tell her. Some part of him had come to enjoy this secret, the way it set him and Hannibal apart from the rest of the world. Together. He didn't want to give that up.

*

Will flies to Florence without letting Hannibal know he's coming. Part of him is planning to change his mind at the last second. Part of him is aiming to catch Hannibal off guard. As if in retribution for his less-than-honest intentions, everything goes wrong.

They sit on the runway in Dulles for two hours. Will misses his connecting flight and is stranded in Amsterdam for another four hours. By the time he gets to Florence, he's been

awake for at least a decade and he's had so much coffee than his entire body is buzzing gently and he feels he's floating an inch off the ground. He has no emotional reaction when they tell him they've lost his luggage. Of course they have.

He takes the shuttle from the airport to the train station and stands outside looking around at the city. He's not sure of the time or the time zone, but the light says it's mid-morning. He walks, nearly buys another coffee, and decides against it.

He should call Hannibal, but he's still somehow holding onto the idea that he might turn around and go home. That it might be better that way. He thinks about getting a hotel room and sleeping first, trying to order his mind before he calls, not that ordering his mind has ever helped. Hannibal disorders it just by existing.

He walks. And walks. Morning shifts toward noon. He's outside the US for the first time in his life. On a whim. For love. Of one sort or another.

He stands looking up at a church with a red tiled dome and a marble facade. He thinks it's the one that Hannibal sent him a drawing of a week ago.

"Will?"

He turns. Hannibal is standing behind him with huge eyes and open mouth, and then in the next second, Hannibal is pressed tight against him with his arms around Will's neck. Will sighs into his hair, relaxing, holding him close.

"You came," Hannibal says. "It is you? I'm not mad? Did you write and tell me? Did I miss a letter?"

"I wanted to surprise you," Will says.

Hannibal pulls back enough to smile at him, face shining with happiness. "You did."

*

Hannibal takes him back to his rented apartment and shoos him into the shower. He leaves clothes on the toilet seat. When Will is clean and dry, he puts them on. The t-shirt hangs on him, too large in the shoulders, and the sweatpants aren't much better. Hannibal is bigger than he is now. He knows that in his head. He just can't seem to keep it in his heart.

"Sleep," Hannibal tells him, pointing to the single bed.

"We have things to talk about," Will says.

"We have everything to talk about, but not now. You're tired."

He is tired. He lies down and listens to Hannibal in the kitchen. He smells garlic and onions. He closes his eyes.

When he wakes again, Hannibal is in bed beside him, turned on his side with one hand on Will's chest. Late afternoon gold spills across the bed. Will touches the back of Hannibal's

wrist and sees his sleeping smile. He wants this moment to last forever.

market

Hannibal's apartment has a balcony just big enough for two chairs. The small round table remains halfway inside, but it's enough to set their plates and wine glasses on. They eat pasta with wild mushrooms and rabbit and watch the cobblestone streets flood with gold.

Will has stepped into another world. Not just the light and the city and the feeling of displacement in time brought on by jet lag, but Hannibal himself.

"You're different," Will says.

"Did you expect me to remain a child forever?"

"Maybe."

Hannibal gives him a fond look. "You've watched me grow. You were there for every step."

"Not at Harvard."

"I changed very little at Harvard."

"You've changed here," Will says.

Hannibal inclines his head. He looks around. The city is sliding into shadow, but the sun comes over the tops of the buildings and lights his eyes. "I have become more myself here. And I have thought of you more than ever." He gives Will a teasing, flirtatious smile. "You would be pleased, I think, if you knew under what circumstances."

"I'm afraid to ask," Will says, and it's perfectly true.

Hannibal picks up his wine and holds it to the light. "The thought of you has stopped me from doing something which I might otherwise have done. I don't believe I'll tell you what, but you would have disapproved."

Will looks at him warily, but he is harder to read than he was even two months ago. "You're not talking about seeing another guy."

Hannibal gives him a slow blink like a contented cat. "No, Will. I have even less interest in other people than I did before. Although I'm pleased to know you would disapprove of that as well."

Will looks down at his pasta. It wouldn't be disapproval. It would be jealousy, and he thinks they both know it.

"I made a decision after that," Hannibal continues. "About you. Would you like to know what it is?"

Will looks up at him but says nothing, again afraid to ask.

“I decided that I would rather have you than anything else,” Hannibal says simply. “That includes sex. I can do without. If I don’t give you that moral excuse to push me away, then you will stop trying. We will be together.”

Will still says nothing, but his heart catches and quickens. Together.

“People might think it odd at home, so we won’t go home. I can attend medical school here, or perhaps we can go to France. We will get a house and bring the dogs over.” Hannibal pauses, for the first time looking uncertain. He winds and unwinds pasta on his fork. “You will stay with me. Won’t you?”

Will looks at the sunlight on Hannibal’s face and the sharp shadows under his eyes. The only answer he can give is yes.

*

The next day, they walk to the market together. Hannibal leads him past stalls full of glistening fish, eyes glassy and clear, past green lettuces and red ones and speckled ones. Hannibal takes his hand. Will lets him do it. Their palms press warmly together.

Will slept in Hannibal’s bed last night. They slept together, side by side, listening to each other’s breath. Will knows how this will end. If he stays, he will eventually give in. To everything. If he leaves, things will go back to the way they were, but Will no longer believes Hannibal will get over him. And he knows he won’t get over Hannibal.

“Fresh sardines with lemon and capers?” Hannibal asks.

“Sure. Sounds great.”

Hannibal gives him a sidelong look. “You always say that.”

“It always does.”

A shadow of strong emotion crosses Hannibal’s face. He leans in quickly and kisses Will’s cheek. He drops his eyes to the fish afterwards and he sounds a little breathless when he speaks to the woman with the sardines in Italian. She smiles at both of them, pats Hannibal’s hand, and gives him a discount on the fish.

“What did she say at the end?” Will asks as they walk away. It had made Hannibal look at her, startled and blinking for a second, before he recovered his composure.

Hannibal is silent for a few steps, surveying the lemons. “She said we look happy together.” He paused, rolling a lemon between his palms. “Are we happy, Will?”

Will looks at the hope in his eyes and feels his own heart lift in response. He breathes in the scents of the market, citrus and herbs and flowers. The sun is bright in a pale blue sky. He is happy. He’s happier right now than he has been in months, and he knows why. He takes Hannibal’s hand and squeezes it deliberately in his own. “I am. Are you?”

The contained ecstatic joy that spreads over Hannibal's face lights up places inside Will that he didn't know were dark, warms him where he didn't know he was cold. Neither of them say anything else. They stand still between the lemons and the rosemary and hold onto each other's hands so tightly that it aches down to the bone. It's the best pain Will has ever felt.

the beginning

Chapter Notes

please note the rating update...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In the end, it takes less than a month. Will can't claim to be surprised. They are sharing a bed every night, and it's not a large bed. He goes to sleep and wakes up with Hannibal's scent in his nose and Hannibal's warmth beside him and Hannibal's sleepy, pleased noises at every incidental touch.

Hannibal will make coffee for both of them and bring it back to bed and translate sections of the newspaper for him. He's the only twenty-something Will knows who subscribes to a daily paper in physical form. Even Will canceled his subscription years ago.

It's a morning like this, scented with coffee and toothpaste, when Hannibal looks over at Will the way he looks at him so often now, less fervent, less desperate, far happier, and Will kisses him.

He panics nearly as badly as he did the first time, except that he pushes himself out of bed instead of Hannibal, backs up against the window, and tips the bowl of lemons onto the floor. They both spend the next few minutes pulling lemons out from under the bed.

"I should dust under here," Hannibal says, one arm extended into the narrow shadows.

Will looks at the curve of his back and his bare feet and his bed head and just — lets go. He puts a hand at Hannibal's waist. Hannibal freezes and looks back over his shoulder slowly, eyes averted until the last moment.

"Will?"

"Can you reach it?"

"I believe so."

"Is that the last one?"

Hannibal nods and swallows. He fishes it out and produces it for inspection. Will takes it from him and puts it in the bowl and waits.

After a few seconds, Hannibal takes a shaky breath. "Shall we go back to bed?"

Will nods, and they do, sitting shoulder to shoulder again. Hannibal picks up the newspaper, puts it down, and looks at Will. His lashes are pale and curved, and they glow in the morning light.

“May I—?” he asks.

Will nods again. His hand moves on its own to Hannibal’s knee.

Hannibal closes his eyes and opens them and reaches for Will but stops before he gets there. His hands clench on the air, inches from Will’s chest. The line of his mouth wavers.

Will pulls him close, kisses his hair, feels the wet heat of Hannibal’s mouth against his collar bone. “It’s okay,” he says. “It’s okay.”

Hannibal slides his arms around Will slowly, like he thinks he’ll have to fight for every inch. He holds on so tightly that Will can’t breathe for a few seconds and then he can’t breathe for the kisses Hannibal gives him, one after another, fast and hard and clumsy, teeth and noses bumping.

“Shh, it’s okay,” Will tells him again. He slides his hand up to cup the back of Hannibal’s head and guide him. Hannibal’s breath hitches. The tears come. Will can taste them.

“I love you,” Hannibal says, voice thick. It’s an accusation.

“I know. I know. I love you too.” Will can’t apologize. He still thinks he did the right thing. He still thinks this might be the wrong thing, but he’s pretty sure, at least, that the only one to suffer lasting hurt from it will be him. That’s good enough. If Hannibal moves past this, past him, he’ll deal with it. But for now, he lets himself hope and he kisses Hannibal’s tears.

“What do you want?” he asks.

Hannibal draws back to look at him, almost affronted, hair standing out from his head in even more of a mess than before. “I’ve been waiting for this for five years. How can I possibly choose?”

Will smiles at him. “You want me to choose then?”

Hannibal narrows his eyes. “You’re mocking me.”

“I’m not,” Will says softly. “I promise.”

“I imagined so much,” Hannibal murmurs. He presses another kiss to Will’s lips and licks into his mouth. “So much. Night after night.”

Will smooths his hair back from his face and tugs him close. They lie in the slant of sunlight across the bed, bodies pressed together. Hannibal’s hands smell like lemons. Will kisses his palms. He can feel Hannibal’s erection.

That’s almost more than Will can deal with, but his own body is still responding. Hannibal rocking against him, the feel of another body after ten years without, is enough to make Will

gasp and clutch, and the part his hands catch on is the smooth curve Hannibal's ass.

Hannibal makes a high soft noise, buries his face in Will's neck, and begs softly. "Yes, yes, yes, please, Will. Please."

Will squeezes and kneads. Hannibal gasps and thrusts. Will tugs at both their pajamas but doesn't manage to do more than get his hands inside Hannibal's and on bare skin, which draws a whine from Hannibal that ends with teeth scraping Will's neck.

That light shivery bite gets Will even harder, and Hannibal must feel it. He does it again and again until Will is the one gasping and begging, squeezing hard at Hannibal's ass. He pulls Hannibal on top of him, letting the weight anchor him.

Hannibal grinds down hard and finally gets their pajamas down. Skin to skin, almost silent, they move together, sticky now with sweat. Hannibal shakes as he comes, clinging to Will, and Will only has seconds to thrust into that slick heat before he's coming too, mouth wide open and staring at the ceiling, seeing nothing.

Hannibal gets a towel for them. His hands shake as he cleans them up, and he curls up in Will's arms afterward as if he'll never move again. Will kisses his hair and rubs his back.

"You won't leave," Hannibal says, muffled against Will's chest. "Not now. You won't, will you?"

"I promise."

"And we can — again?"

"Yeah."

Hannibal looks up at him, eyes a little wet and nose a little red. "And you're not — sorry? I don't want you to be unhappy, Will. I don't want — if you want to go—"

Will holds him tighter. "I'm not going anywhere. I don't want to be anywhere else."

Hannibal studies him, looking for the truth, and Will lets him see it. Hannibal slumps against him with relief and takes a long, slow breath. "Well. What shall we have for breakfast? I could make crepes."

"Sounds great," Will says.

Hannibal kisses him again, lips lingering against his for a long long time.

Chapter End Notes

thecountessolivia has written an awesome ficlet that follows this!

End Notes

You can check out my original writing here if you're interested.

emungere.tumblr.com

Works inspired by this one

[Restricted Work] by bluecarrot

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!